

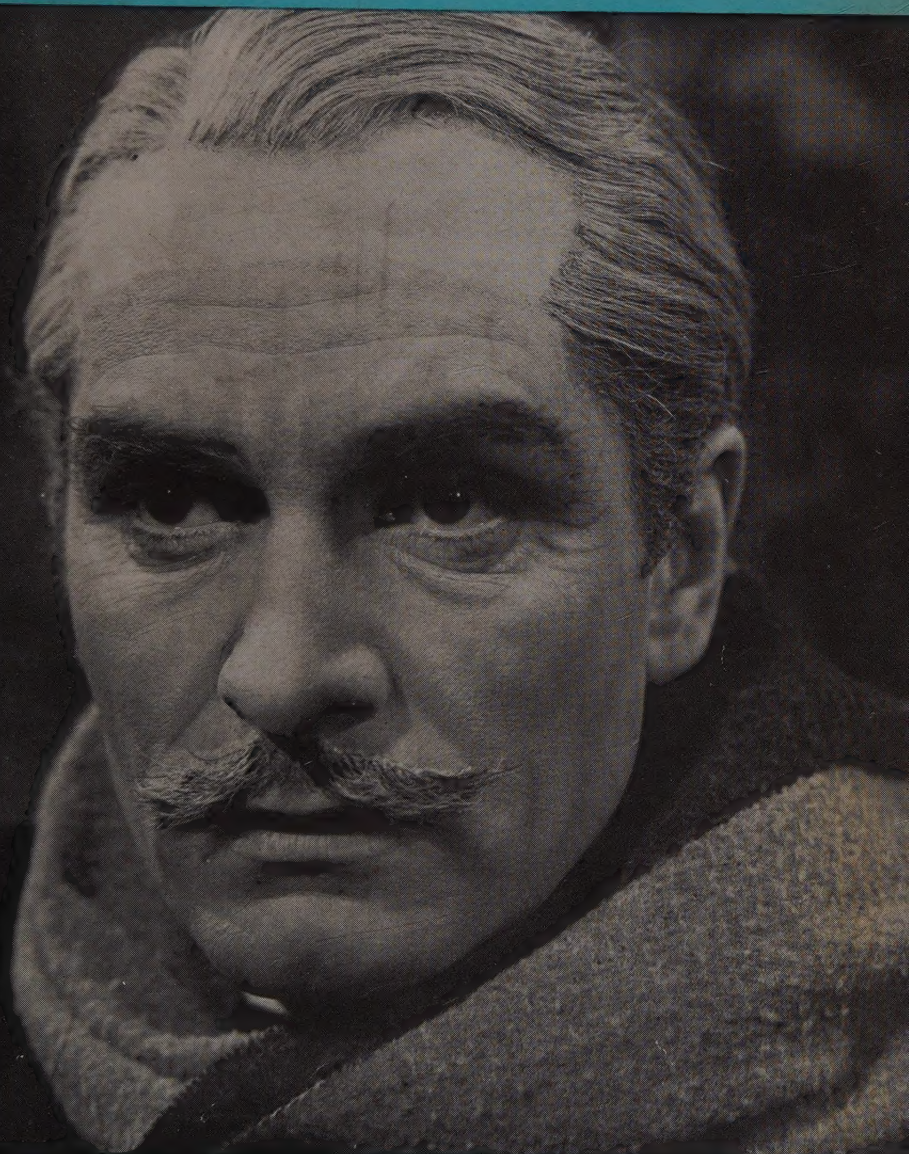
MARCH 1950

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THEATRE WORLD



Picture by Houston-Rogers

Wendy Hiller and Godfrey Tearle

as Catherine and Dr. Sloper, have earned unqualified praise for their performances in *The Heiress* at the Haymarket Theatre, which though equally moving, differ considerably in their interpretation from those of Peggy Ashcroft and Ralph Richardson who created the roles in this country. Miss Hiller was the Catherine of the original Broadway production, and it would seem that the brilliantly successful London version, directed by John Gielgud, which is now in its second year, has still a long run ahead.

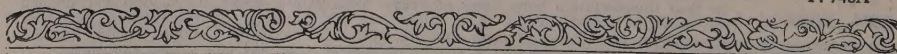


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P. 746A



Theatre World

(Incorporating PLAY PICTORIAL and THE AMATEUR STAGE)

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Edited by Frances Stephens

March 1950

REVIEWS of several important productions have been held over until next month and these include Hugh Hunt's most excellent production of *Hamlet* at the New in which Michael Redgrave has scored a personal triumph; *Larger Than Life* at the Duke of York's, which has brought another triumph for Jessie Royce Landis; *A Man of the World* at the Lyric, Hammersmith, and *The Purple Fig Tree* at the Piccadilly Theatre. *The Leopard and Primrose* and *The Peanuts* at the Bedford, and *The Medicine Man* at the Embassy, are other plays not covered this month, together with *Flowers for the Living* at the Duchess, which received attention in our columns following its original production at the New Lindsey some time ago. There was a pleasant revival of *Wild Violets* at the Stoll on 11th February and a successful transportation from the radio has been *Take It From Here*, which proved a highlight of the new variety programme at the Victoria Palace on 6th February.

Now in its second year, *Harvey* recently suffered a great loss, and all honour is due to Leslie Henson for so gallantly and successfully stepping into the role of Elwood P. Dowd at the Prince of Wales.

There have been two new ballets in recent weeks, *El Destino*, a most effective Spanish ballet by Angelo Andes at the Sadler's Wells Theatre and *Don Quixote*, by Ninette de Valois at the Opera House. A new production of *La Traviata* had its first performance at Sadler's Wells Theatre on 21st February.

Two plays which did not make the grade were *The Philadelphia Story* and *The Non-Resident*, the latter running only a few performances at the Phoenix.

Over the Footlights

March will see the early opening of the Stratford season on the 9th, with Peter Brooks' production of *Measure for Measure*, and new plays in London will include *Home at Seven*, which opens at Wyndhams on 7th March, a revival of *John Gabriel Borkman* at the Arts on 1st March, and a new Crazy Gang show, *Knights of Madness*, at the Victoria Palace on the 16th.

The sudden death of Sid Field at the early age of forty-five came as a very great shock to the London theatre. Comedians of his calibre only appear once in many generations and so individual was his charm and appeal that it seems unlikely he will ever be replaced. That he could suffer from ill-health and still make people laugh was one of his greatest achievements. Once he said to this writer, without complaining, that he never felt really well, and immediately a famous story came to mind of the ailing and depressed man who went to a strange doctor for help. The doctor said, "What you want is cheering up, to be taken out of yourself. Why don't you go and see Grimaldi?" "I am Grimaldi," came the reply.

To finish on a more cheerful note one must record with the utmost pleasure a delightful party that was given for the staff and contributors of *Theatre World* in celebration of the magazine's twenty-fifth birthday. Ronnie Hill, composer, lyric writer and revue artist and a faithful reader since the first number, was the host; highspot of the evening was a magnificent cake whose inscription "*Theatre World—Many Happy Returns*" adorned the top depicting curtains and footlights of a stage. Henceforth the staff will view without a pang the famous Baddeley cake at Drury Lane! F.S.

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New Shows of the Month

"The Miser"—New, 17th Jan.
 "Party Manners"—Embassy, 17th Jan.
 "Venus Observed"—St. James's, 18th Jan.
 (See pp. 11-18).
 "Shall We Join the Ladies?" and
 "The Boy With A Cart"—Lyric, Hammer-smith, 19th Jan.
 "The Shaughraun"—Bedford, 24th Jan.
 "Captain Banner"—Boltons, 24th Jan.
 "School for Scoundrels"—"Q," 24th Jan.
 "Mrs. Warren's Profession"—Arts, 26th Jan.
 "Ring Round the Moon"—Globe, 26th Jan.
 "Louise"—"Q," 31st Jan.
 "The Schoolmistress"—Saville, 1st Feb.

"The Miser"

THE fourth production of the present season was Miles Malleeson's delightful free adaptation of Molière's *The Miser*, which Tyrone Guthrie produced. With Georges Benda's colourful scenery and costumes as a most satisfying background this inconsequential tale of an old miser who is bettered by his son and daughter, makes charming entertainment, and Miles Malleeson has a way of enticing his audience if only through his little trick of intimate asides and sundry bits of stage play which are certainly not in the original script.

As Harpagon, the super miser, Mr. Malleeson is patently in his element and contrives in his own special wheedling way to extract some sympathy for the silly old man who thought he could win a pretty young girl for his wife and keep his baubees too. Michael Aldridge, Diana Churchill, John Van Eyssen and Jane Wenham provide the youth and the love interest with distinction, while Paul Rogers, Angela Baddeley, George Benson and Leo McKern are rogues and vagabonds in the best Shakespeare tradition. Walter Hudd and Mark Dignam acquit themselves well in their smallish appearances as Justice of the Peace and Signeur Anselm.

The Miser is a most joyous addition to the repertoire, for which all praise to Miles Malleeson, a real man of the theatre.

F.S.

"Party Manners"

VAL Gielgud's new play provides very good light entertainment. Raymond Lovell is a very fine comic actor. Clive Morton is unsurpassed as a crisply authoritative man of affairs. George Merritt is a perfect model of a Labour Member, old style, with a fine bouquet of burlesque. The play gives these good actors opportunity to do again what they have so well done before

and it has sufficient political allusion to keep it running until 23rd February, but it never goes deep enough to satisfy the interest it often begins to arouse.

Atomic research is vigorously pursued off stage and Science advances to a point where the Cabinet is placed in a serious pre-Election dilemma; whether to publish the results in the interests of economic recovery or to withhold them in the cause of national security. This is stated but not argued; it is wrangled over. The British bent for compromise seems not to have been heard of. Whenever two characters get together they quickly arrive at a misunderstanding of a simple matter and their ensuing duologue bubbles briskly and soon boils over. Domestic tiff and political squabble get the same treatment, an exception being provided only when Raymond Lovell, as a needy Earl engaged as chef and butler in a mansion he has sold, produces for the enjoyment of his employer and himself a quantity of old port which by rights belongs to the Office of Works.

The under-plot, in which Boy Meets Girl, is well looked after on similar lines, but at close of play Boy Gets Girl, everything else remaining unchanged. H.G.M.

"Shall We Join the Ladies?" and "The Boy with a Cart"

ROMANTIC melodrama followed by Romantic pastoral, both skilfully directed by John Gielgud, make a very pleasant evening.

First performed at the opening of the theatre of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in 1921, Barrie's *Shall We Join the Ladies?* can be regarded as a first act so promising that any subsequent development would be disappointing, or as a kind of round-the-table game played by professionals for exhibition purposes, introducing cliché upon cliché, trick after trick, to test the technical equipment of the producer and actors. The present company play the game very well indeed and pictorially the scene is not without nostalgic allure. As Sam Smith, the host, Ernest Jay is Pickwickian in appearance but he lacks Mr. Pickwick's gravity and is exceedingly Lob-like and kittenish, quite a roguey-poguey in fact. As a result, the melodrama can never be taken seriously and at times the affair seems an expensively elaborate burlesque.

Christopher Fry's early play, *The Boy With A Cart*, harks back to the medieval miracle play in simplicity of theme, characterisation and construction. Cuthman, like

(Right):

JESSIE ROYCE LANDIS

one of America's most distinguished actresses, who has caused a sensation on the occasion of her first appearance over here in *Larger Than Life*, Guy Bolton's adaptation of Maugham's novel *Theatre*, at the Duke of York's Theatre, produced too late for review. Two of her best known roles are that of Epithania in Shaw's *The Millionairess* and Cecily Harrington in *Love From A Stranger*. During the past few years she has starred in a number of the Theatre Guild's Broadway productions, including the Saroyan play *Love's Old Sweet Song* (1940), *Papa Is All* (1942) and Strindberg's *Last Dance* (1947). She has also made a number of Hollywood films and was last seen with Clifton Webb in *Mr. Belvedere Goes to College*.

a juvenile Cornish Job, receives messengers with ill tidings. His father has died; the farm has been seized; his livelihood is gone. With faith stimulated by affliction, he builds a heavy-looking hand-cart—a picturesque property, a real gem—and in this cart his Mother rides, from it she sometimes falls, as he trundles it up hill and down hill through Southern England on a pilgrimage to build a shrine in a place not yet revealed. The sign comes to him at Steyning in Sussex. Steyning had a church in Saxon times and in Benedictine times, but, to judge by the costumes, Cuthman lived in Stanley Spencer's times and we must accept its then churchless condition; for Cuthman's glory is that he inspired the villagers to build a church and, when human strength failed, a miracle completed the work.

Richard Burton well expresses the steadfast sincerity of Cuthman, his simple faith, his patience in adversity, his courage, his moments of exaltation. It is a moving and admirable performance. The character of his mother is lovably conceived and beautifully brought to life by Mary Jerrold. Indeed, one cannot but be impressed by Miss Jerrold's wide range, for she passes from that ancient iniquity, Lady Wrathie, in Sir James Barrie's test piece, to the aged innocent, Cuthman's mother, by an art almost too astounding for comment. The mother of Cuthman is a truly dear old lady, but not spiritually minded. She values respectability and troubles her head with what people might think. She marries finally a comical old gaffer on his last legs in Steyning. Probably the dear "Carnish" accent that Noel Willman gave him made the old lady feel at home with him and brought back her youth.

Whereas *The Lady's Not For Burning* exhibits the Crown Jewels illuminated by Roman candles and Bengal lights, *The Boy With A Cart* shows us some choice old communion plate borne reverently in glad procession. The grouping generally is as clever a picture as an artful arrangement of china figures, save that no single umbrella can be expected to enhance the beauty of a picture. Generally, what might be called



the ballet element, a very important one in this production, is very satisfying.

H.G.M.

"The Shaughraun"

THE production of *The Shaughraun* by Dion Boucicault proved another rewarding excursion into the 19th century. The author was a great actor, a playwright prolific by present standards and the best "stage Irishman" of his day. *The Shaughraun* has a rousing story which requires over a dozen scene changes. Patrick Lynott, the scenic artist, made a very good job of this.

The play also puts a test upon the actors and on the second night they were a little unprepared. There was, moreover, strong suspicion that, even had they been thoroughly acquainted with every word of the play, the situations and speeches would have proved too strong, or too crude, for what they had to bring to them. All this rich hash of loyalty, gallantry, sacrifice, villainy, romantic love and broad humour cannot be made to seem natural by mere under-playing. If we are to revive this kind of play, even infrequently, and there are good reasons why we should, we need actors who can strike an attitude without shame and produce their voices so as to rouse the echoes.

Fortunately, Bill Shine was not subject to the pervading infection of naturalness and he played Conn the Shaughraun with all his wits and all his muscles, as one imagines his father and his uncle did before him. Dirk Bogarde presented an agreeable façade as



(Left):

PATRICIA MILLER

one of the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet Company's most promising young dancers, as Beauty in John Cranko's new ballet, *Beauty and the Beast*, to music by Ravel. The decor and costumes are by Margaret Kaye, the unusual setting being executed in "fabric collage." Patricia Miller was born in Pretoria, South Africa, in December 1927, and studied ballet in Cape Town under Dulcie Howes. Her partner in *Beauty and the Beast*, David Poole, is also South African, as is choreographer John Cranko.

(Picture by Denis de Marney)

Captain Molyneux. John Kelly provided a live and taking parish priest on properly broad lines. As the villain, Tony Quin found the lines elusive. He was far too much like us to be hissed, which seems to be what the Bedford wants, and his villainy was spoken with so quiet and natural an intonation we could scarcely believe what we heard. As his low tool, Larry Burns made a much enjoyed comic contribution. The play was produced by Judith Furse.

H.G.M.

"Captain Banner"

THE re-opening of the Boltons is a matter for rejoicing. That the artistic excellence of their productions should have led to financial eclipse can cause no surprise. Intelligent discrimination in plays and impeccable taste in their presentation cannot be expected to show a profit. That was recognised by authority when it said, "Let there be an Arts Council."

Realising that one of the Company's best assets is the enthusiasm of its audiences, Mr. C. R. Morton, Receiver and Manager for the Debenture Holders of Boltons Theatre (Kensington) Limited, has decided upon one or two presentations. The first play chosen is *Captain Banner* by George Preedy, a romantic melodrama, laid in the Prison Fortress of Wisberg, on the coast of Denmark, in the middle of the 18th century. We today may imagine the ghost of Rupert of Hentzau stalking along the corridors and the Eagle with Two Heads hovering over the dunes.

Banner's years of boredom, virtual banish-

ment, while he holds office as Governor of the lonely castle, are abruptly ended by the arrival of an important prisoner, the Queen herself, Carolina Sophia, who is attainted, having conspired with a lover to wrest control of the realm from its Chief Minister, Count Akershus, who uses the imbecile king as a rubber stamp. This sinister Count, who never appears, is the play's first cause and the spring of all its action. He has sent the Queen to remote Wisberg, attended only by Baroness Bernstorff, one of his spies, with intent that she shall die there. Capt. Banner and his Chaplain, Pastor Oder, are promised restoration to favour in Copenhagen after the Queen's death. Since Pastor Oder was originally sent to Wisberg immediately after an acquittal on the poisoning charge and still possesses a poison-chest for his chemical experiments, the Queen's chances of leaving Wisberg are dim indeed. Desperately, she applies every weapon in her armoury to the subjugation of Captain Banner. The exile's pride at having a queen as suppliant decides his course. The two plan to fly together. Meanwhile, Pastor Oder is getting impatient. The Queen, expecting an attempt on her life, avoids her room and she and Banner have a rendezvous in another chamber. Suddenly, there are noises and cries in the castle, followed by loud knocks on the door. Banner prepares to kill as many intruders as he can. It is unnecessary. Fortune's wheel has revolved. The sinister Count has died and the Queen is recalled. Banner refuses to go to Court with her as her lover, a position he regards as undignified and precarious. It seems, however, that the alternative is no better. Pride to pride has been opposed and "pride is the life of a woman." The Queen decrees that he remain at Wisberg "for life." Since the poisonous pastor, balked of his prey, also remains, the length of a life sentence is more than usually problematical.

There is a splendid cast, consisting entirely of Old Boltonians. At the head, John Wyse presents a gallant figure in the name part and rouses admiration for the man and his pride and his simple heroics. Isabel Dean, if not regal, gives a very moving performance as the Queen. A touching figure, too, is that of the girl Katrine, gently presented by Jill Balcon. Julian Somers is a plausible Pastor

Oder, Veronica Turleigh is cold as a fish slice as the treacherous Baroness and Nigel Clarke is grimly austere as the emissary of the dreaded Count Akershus. H.G.M.

"School for Scoundrels"

DISCHARGED soldiers have always been an embarrassment to peace-time society.

Charles Fenn in his play takes two men who entered a secret service school in America during the last war, shows them isolated in squalor and corruption in Northern Burma and settling down again in New York after the war. The Chief of the Secret Service School, looking more the kind of gentleman who would send them into the chorus than into the commandos, explains that the Ten Commandments must be set aside, that a Machiavellian outlook must be acquired and so must skill in arts of force and fraud. Bill Jones, who seems a man of education and experience, replies, "You can't do worse than murder and what else is war anyway?" "Rick" Riley, whose education and previous experience seem to have been limited to the seamy side of life, grins gleefully at the prospect of free training in crime and a licence to practice.

The war over, it appears that New York now has two crooks where only half a crook existed before. They double-cross each other to a dizzy degree and there may be satisfaction drawn from the result wherein the man of superior breeding and education proves the superior crook, but I am not sure.

Robert Ayres and Guy Kingsley-Poynter give all that need be asked as Bill Jones and "Rick" Riley respectively and there is never a dull moment after they have established themselves. A faint suggestion at the end that Bill Jones had reformed or was about to reform blunted the play's point and seemed artistically a mistake. The play was directed by Robert Henderson. H.G.M.

"Mrs. Warren's Profession"

THIS Arts Theatre Club's revival was refreshing proof that Shaw's mind, from the distant nineties, has a force and clarity which makes our contemporary theatre seem a little pale and lifeless. That this play was banned for so long may now seem surprising, but many seeing this production may feel that our stage today would be in livelier health if new young writers would equally challenge our times. Or is the hydrogen bomb too imponderable compared with barmaids at four shillings a week and girls dying from paint poisoning?

It is to the credit of Brenda Bruce, playing Vivie, the daughter, that from the first moments she found the period and mood of the play, and built up a young woman caught in a set of circumstances too formidable for most girls, but not for her. Perhaps a little too tight lipped and severe, but again, per-

haps not when matched against the almost blowsy arrogance and full lipped sensuality of her mother, as played by Aletha Orr. Two worthy contestants, with honours to the younger woman, especially in the last act where too much shouting from Mrs. Warren detracted from the climax.

The four men took their parts well in a nicely balanced cast. Nicholas Meredith as Praed was the Shavian artist to a fine point of polite futility; Eric Berry as earthy and mundane as any titled landlord of the nineties; Vernon Greeves a little pert but quite good looking enough and self-assured for Frank Gardner; with Douglas Jefferies earning full marks for his pointed study of the embarrassments of the Reverend Samuel Gardner.

A revival of merit in the Club's most worthwhile policy. F.J.D.

"Ring Round the Moon"

IT was undue modesty on Mr. Christopher Fry's part to call this elegant piece of witty entertainment "a charade with music." Nevertheless, one shouldn't go to the Globe Theatre looking for a moral, or even, perhaps for a sweet reasonableness, though to be entertained without let up for an evening is reasonableness itself. The carping will grumble that Anouilh has borrowed too freely from Wilde, or that Fry has not

(Continued overleaf)



MARIAN SPENCER

who plays a leading role opposite Sir Ralph Richardson in R. C. Sherriff's new play *Home At Seven*, which opens at Wyndham's Theatre on 7th March.

(Portrait by Vivienne)

adapted freely enough and has all too magnanimously restrained his poetic muse. No doubt all this was foreseen, hence that understatement, "charade."

Ring Round The Moon is really just another Cinderella story with Prince Charming's twin brother thrown in. The fairy godmother is Madame Desmortes (Margaret Rutherford), of the French nobility, a lady of quick wit and all-seeing eye. Cinderella also has a mother of embarrassing loquacity, and other characters may be said to have been borrowed from Shaw, Ostrovsky, Wilde and, perhaps, even Coward!

Paul Scofield appears, with commendable versatility, as the brothers Hugo and Frederic; the one handsome, heartless and fascinating; the other diffident and shy. Hugo employs for an evening a little ballet dancer, Isabelle (Claire Bloom), whose task it is to outshine all the ladies at the ball and distract his brother's attention from Diana (Audrey Fildes), the spoilt if lovely daughter of a melancholy millionaire, whom Hugo himself covets. Isabelle succeeds after many a false start, and the disadvantage of imagining herself in love with the scheming Hugo.

The stories attaching to other members of Madame Desmortes' entourage have their own niches, so that a weakness of the play is a certain disjointedness, though one wouldn't have missed above all the hilarious

tango scene between Lady India and Bombelles (Marjorie Stewart and Richard Wattis); nor the deliciously abandoned money-tearing scene between Isabelle and the millionaire (Cecil Trouncer).

The play is directed by Peter Brook, and the decor by Oliver Messel is a joy to the eye. F.S.

"Louise"

LOUISE by Elsa Malik is a play for individualists. The people in it who form attachments are unlucky. Louise stuck to David through years of adversity. He was selfish, priggish and unfaithful but Louise steadfastly maintained her self-sacrificing course with him and he suddenly became a fashionable portrait-painter with a big income. This seemed to make him more unpleasant. Louise, now 35, tells David that she is going to have a baby and he is quite unenthusiastic. His wealthy half-brother, Julian, dies for love of Louise and this tragic event seems to cut the bond that held the characters together. The baby dies and Louise dismisses David and appears to decide to live for music and memory.

The play has some effective moments of a sad kind. Julian's first entry, carrying a stray cat, is pathetically telling although over-

(Continued on page 33)

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Duke: Aren't you my son?

Edgar: Yes, father, of course I am.

Duke: Then its up to you to choose who shall be your mother.

(*L. to R.*): Laurence Olivier as the Duke of Altair, Denholm Elliott as Edgar, his son, and George Relph as Herbert Reedbeck, his agent, in the opening scene of the play, in the Observatory Room at Stellmere Park, the Duke's Mansion.

“Venus Observed”

AT THE ST. JAMES'S

SIR Laurence Olivier's courageous new venture as actor-manager was successfully launched on 18th January. He chose for his opening production a new play by Christopher Fry, which gave splendid opportunities for an elegant production and fine speaking well worthy of the great tradition of the St. James's Theatre.

Once again Christopher Fry has given us a play of rare fascination, in which everything is subordinate to his superb language and exciting imagery, but there is also much to amuse in this rather high-flown story of an ageing widower Duke loth to admit his failing charm. His great consolation is in astronomy and the limitless ranges of the study of the heavens, and to his observatory he invites three old flames, from among

whom his son is to choose a mother after the manner of Paris with an apple. Into the unreality of this situation bursts the beautiful young daughter of the Duke's agent and thereafter Altair has no eyes for anyone else. How he failed to win her love is the theme of the play.

Sir Laurence heads his company as the philosophising Duke with a rare dignity, and is cleverly supported by a team of actors and actresses who most obviously appreciate to the full the richness of Mr. Fry's medium.

The production by Sir Laurence is flawless and it would be worth the trip on its own to see Roger Furse's delightful sets, particularly the exquisite decor for the Temple of the Ancient Virtues, first seen in the second act.

PICTURES BY ANGUS McBEAN



Edgar: Before you go
To the window, I wonder if you'd mind
accepting this apple?

Edgar's choice falls on Rosabel Fleming who, not realising the full significance of the offer, gracefully declines.

(L. to R.): Valerie Taylor as Rosabel Fleming and Rache Kempson as Hilda Taylor-Snell, two of the Duke's ex-mistresses



Reedbeck: My dear daughter, his Grace the Duke of Altair.

The sudden arrival from America of Perpetua, Reedbeck's daughter creates an entirely new situation for the Duke.

(Right): Heather Stannard as Perpetua.



Duke: Then, as Paris abdicates, I must offer
The sweet round robin fruit myself—

Edgar, who is obviously attracted to Perpetua, ignores his father's request, and so the Duke tenders the apple himself, whereupon Perpetua whips out a revolver and shoots the fruit from his grasp.

(On the right): Brenda de Banzie is Jessie Dill, the third of the Duke's old flames.



Perpetua: I've been hearing unimaginable
Things about you.

Later in the Temple in the grounds, Perpetua reproves her father for cheating the Duke during the years of his management of the estate. In the background stands Dominic, Reedbeck's priggish son, who has magnified his father's misdemeanour out of all proportion, and has persuaded his sister that she must marry the Duke to make amends. (Robert Beaumont as Dominic.)



(Above left):

Duke: And then, Perpetua, tonight

If a clear sky inclines you to it, and the heavens

Remain suspended, how would it be

If we trained the telescope on the infinite

And made what we could of what we could see of it?

The Duke while pretending to instruct Perpetua in archery, invites her to his Observatory Room to see the stars that evening.

(Above):

Reedbeck: What did you say to her?

Dominic:

You were crooked.

I simply told her

Reedbeck, in a sudden access of fury, shakes his son, Dominic, for accusing him of dishonesty.

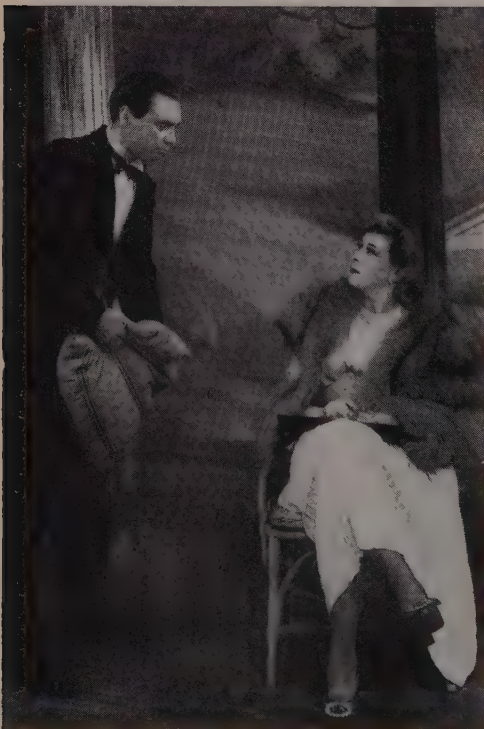
(Left):

Jessie:

Like a good boy and let me write my letter.

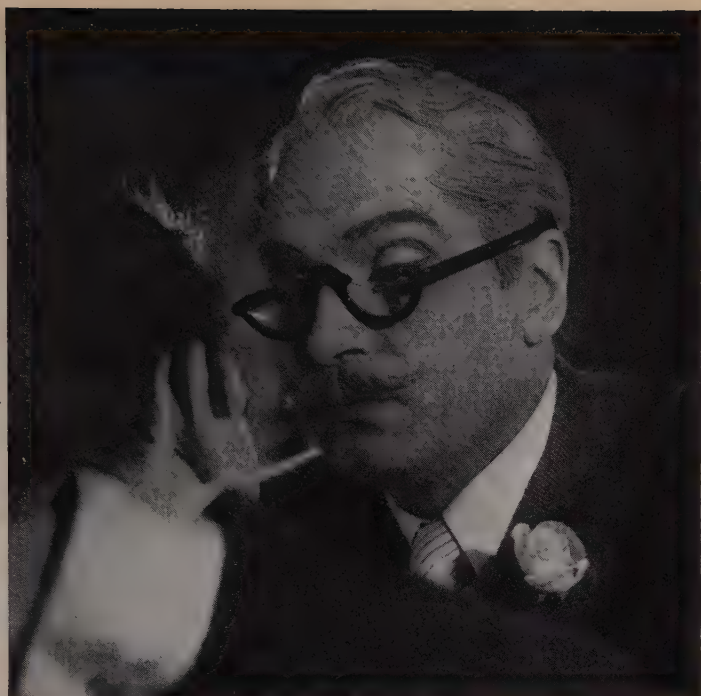
Go away

Jessie Dill has difficulty in getting rid of the voluble Cockney footman, Bates.
(Thomas Heathcote as Bates.)



(Right):

With his son as audience the Duke indulges in some lengthy philosophising on the subject of loneliness.



(Below):

Perpetua: All Halowe'en. I should have liked it dearly, but tonight—

Edgar: You've made some other plan.

The rivalry between father and son begins to develop when Edgar invites Perpetua to a dance which coincides with her promised visit to the Observatory.





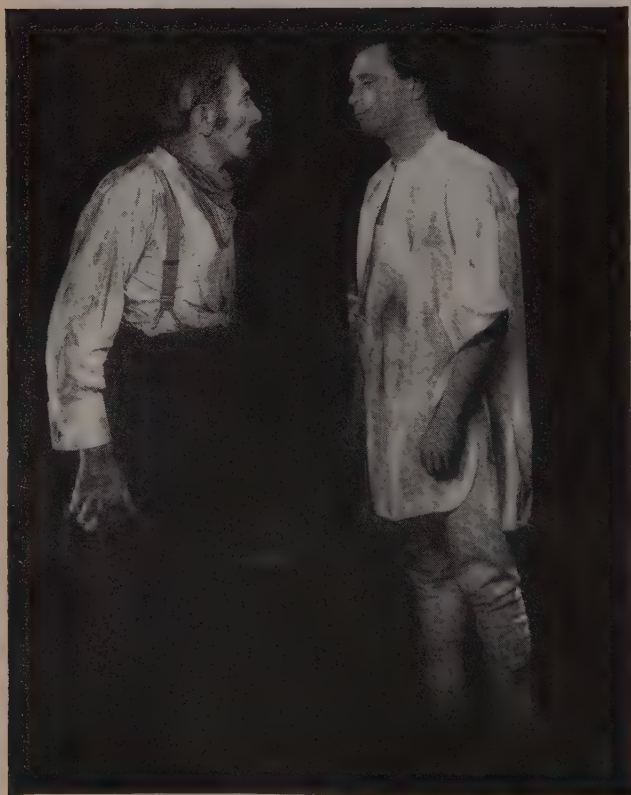
(Left):

Duke: Do you think you love me?

Perpetua: Yes, I love you:

Between the giddiness I love you

In the Observatory Room that night the Duke has made little headway with Perpetua, whose affections incline towards Edgar, but when fire suddenly breaks out and the two are seemingly trapped alone at the top of the house, Perpetua, overcome by fear, imagines for a moment she is in love with the Duke.



(Left):

Captain Fox Reddleman, the Duke's butler (Fred Johnson) and Bates, the footman, have yet another encounter at the height of the fire. These two unconventional servants are sworn enemies and beg to disagree even over the urgent matter of the best means of rescuing their master and Perpetua.



(Above):

Duke: How do you think we're going
to get down, Bates?

Bates: Well, I come up by the ladders,
but according
To the rules we have to slip down
by the snakes, still
Do what your fancy tells you, mate.

Having seen Perpetua safely down
the ladder, the Duke follows his
butler down the stairs.



(Right):

Rosabel: You must believe me,
I fired the wiring,
To destroy the Observatory, to make
you human . . .

While the Duke is hanging lanterns
in the Temple of the Ancient
Virtues, where he and his guests
have taken refuge, Rosabel confesses
that she set fire to the wing
of the house in order to destroy
the Observatory, which has so
obsessed him.



(Left):

Perpetua: I have to make you understand. You must be patient with me.

The Duke still imagines that Perpetua is in love with him, but now that she has recovered from the shock of the fire she sees that it is Edgar whom she loves, and not his father. At first the Duke does not perceive what she is trying to tell him.



(Left):

Duke: Shall I be happy, for myself?
In the name of existence I'll be happy for myself.

The Duke and his agent are left together. Already Reedbeck has been forgiven for his embezzlements, and the Duke, becoming reconciled to the loss of Perpetua, makes up his mind to marry Rosabel, who ironically enough has destroyed his home.

The closing moments of the play.



A scene from *Elizabeth of Austria*, at the Garrick Theatre, some years ago, showing Gower Parks' impressive decor.
(Picture by Angus McBean)

CREATIVE ARTISTS IN THE THEATRE

by ELISABETHE H. C. CORATHIEL

3. Gower Parks

WHEN an artist decides to take up stage designing as a career, his future is very much in the lap of the gods. He cannot foresee the kind of experience that may lie ahead of him, so he has to be prepared for any eventuality. It may be necessary at one moment to focus the contemporary scene, and fix it upon the mind of the audience; his very next assignment may transport him to ancient Greece, to the battlefields of France in Plantagenet times, to the "deep south" where remnants of race-memories fight out their drama between the "coloured" and the "whites"—or any other background against which a playwright has chosen to set his characters. Adaptability is his greatest asset; in fact, he cannot get along without it.

Fate took a hand in Gower Parks' career, and cast his lot almost entirely among the period pieces. He did not deliberately choose this kind of work; it just happened. And being a very versatile artist, he found himself happy in whatever came along.

His first experience was gained in the memorable "costume" revivals of Sir Nigel Playfair at the Lyric, Hammersmith. From these he graduated to Sydney Carroll's ambitious Restoration productions at the Ambassador's—with occasional excursions into modern comedy, such as the phenomenally successful *French Without Tears* at the

Criterion, though even this, you will remember, offered some scope to the connoisseur of carnival attire.

For six successive years his name was associated, as a designer, with the Shakespeare Festivals at Stratford-on-Avon, and he has probably more Shakespearean productions to his credit than any other artist—ten at Stratford alone. He was responsible for the still-vividly-remembered black-and-white *Twelfth Night* for Sydney Carroll, and all the Carroll offerings in the early days of the Open Air Theatre were mounted by Gower Parks. Old Vic productions have also provided him with opportunities for outstanding work, notably *Henry IV, Parts One and Two*, which the Company took on its visit to New York two years ago.

A few years ago, he broke into films, and, strange to say, both the pictures with which his name is most prominently associated, *Meet Me At Dawn* and *My Brother Jonathan*, had a "period" flavour, that of the early 1900's, in which he is something of an expert.

It is not surprising, therefore, that our conversation turned mainly on the costume theme, when I called to interview him.

"My first step, when I undertake a period production, is to look through every book

(Continued on page 29)

"As You Like It" by the BRISTOL OLD VIC



(Above):

● William Abney as the Duke in exile, George Colouris as Jaques and David King-Wood as Orlando in a scene from Allan Davis's production of *As You Like It*. This picture gives an idea of the attractive set for the Forest of Arden scenes, and Hutchinson Scott, who is responsible for both the costumes and scenery, is to be congratulated on his clever use of the small stage.



(Left):

● Frances Rowe as Rosalind and Sonia Williams as Celia in another scene from the play. Miss Rowe, who returned from Broadway to join the Bristol Old Vic Company, was a most attractive Rosalind, and should prove a great asset to the company.

SCENES BY
DESMOND TRIPP, BRISTOL

—RE-OPENING OF THE THEATRE ROYAL, BRISTOL



● (Above): Denis Cannan as Oliver and David King-Wood as Orlando, and (Below): Emrys Jones as Silvius and Dorothy Tutin as Phebe in further glimpses of the play.



A NEW chapter opened in the strange, eventful history of the Theatre Royal, Bristol, when on 23rd January the Bristol Old Vic Company presented there William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. This was an occasion of more than local importance as the Theatre Royal is not only Britain's oldest theatre, having been founded in 1766, but a few years ago was rescued from being a commercial warehouse to become Britain's first National Theatre. During the last eight months essential structural improvements have been carried out, made possible by the wise spending of some £20,000 by the Arts Council, and now the theatre stands as a fascinating place of pilgrimage and enjoyment for all theatre lovers throughout the land.

As You Like It is not everybody's choice and if produced without a sensitive appreciation of its essential theme can be undeniably dull. If too much is made of the story and too little of the theme, too much of the banished Duke and too little of Audrey, we find ourselves unwilling to suspend our disbelief in so flimsy a plot and we are in no mood to enjoy the virtuosity with which the poet plays this gay motif—love making, love making by Lord and Village Wench, by Shepherd and Shepherdess, by Courtier and Lady, and most strangely delightful, love making by proxy, or so it seems, with the cynicisms of Jaques' philosophy in rich contrast to these fripperies. In this production Allan Davis has avoided building up climaxes and lets go for little or nothing such trivialities as usurpation, physical contests and wrongs redressed in high places. Instead he has adroitly thrown the emphasis on the central part of the play when, action almost at a standstill, love-making in Arden is all in all. He has with care and insight built up each character with so nice a sense of contrast that the play unfolds as a traditional theme with entrancing variations—love making sublime and love making ridiculous.

By her accomplished technique and engaging personality Frances Rowe sustains the all-important part of Rosalind with distinction and has a charming foil in the Celia of Sonia Williams. It is an exhilarating experience to hear David King-Wood speak the romantic poetry of Orlando's lines and in Wensley Pithey's Touchstone we have a Clown whose ridiculous wooing of Audrey (Jessie Evans) has nevertheless, the true touch of Shakespearean pathos. The Jaques of George Coulouris is rich in understanding, and the whole cast has reached a level which probably cannot be found in any other provincial centre.

W.H.S.

“ Ring Round the Moon ” at the Globe

(Right):

**MARGARET
RUTHERFORD**

as Madame Desmortes
in which role she scores another
personal triumph in Jean
Anouilh's play which has been
translated for the London stage
in most witty fashion by Chris-
topher Fry. Miss Rutherford
spends the entire evening in a
wheel chair, but this seemingly
hampering restriction does nothing
to dim the brilliance of one
of our leading character actresses.



(Left):

**CLAIRE
BLOOM**
as Isabelle

gives a most piquant performance as the poor little Cinderella girl, calling forth the highest praise, and proving herself undoubtedly one of our most promising young actresses.

**PICTURES BY
HOUSTON-ROGERS**

“Queen Elizabeth Slept Here”

AT
THE
STRAND

● SCENES from the amusing farcical comedy by Talbot Rothwell, which was adapted from an American play by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart. The play is presented by Stanley French and directed by Richard Bird, and the sustained fun is as much due to the skill of the stage hands as to the clever company, headed by Michael Denison and Dulcie Gray, who extract every ounce of laughter from the amusing story of a young couple who saddle themselves with a tumble-down Elizabethan cottage.



(Above right):

Michael: Do you mean to tell me that without a word to anyone you've taken our money and bought this ruin?

Dulcie Gray and Michael Denison as Norah and Michael Fuller.



(Right):

Mr. Kimber: It's so bad for her milk, that stuff!

The bucolic handyman, Mr. Kimber (Kenneth Connor) is more alarmed for his cow than for Michael's coat, which has been badly chewed.



(Right):

Norah: Oh, darling, are you all right

Michael: Fine — couldn't be more comfortable!

Michael suffers a slight mishap with the chimney—yet another moment of disintegration in the old farmhouse.

(Left) Gordon Bell as Steve Hadlett and (right) Joy Hodgkinson as Madge, sister of Michael, who have come to give a hand.

PICTURES BY
HOUSTON-ROGERS



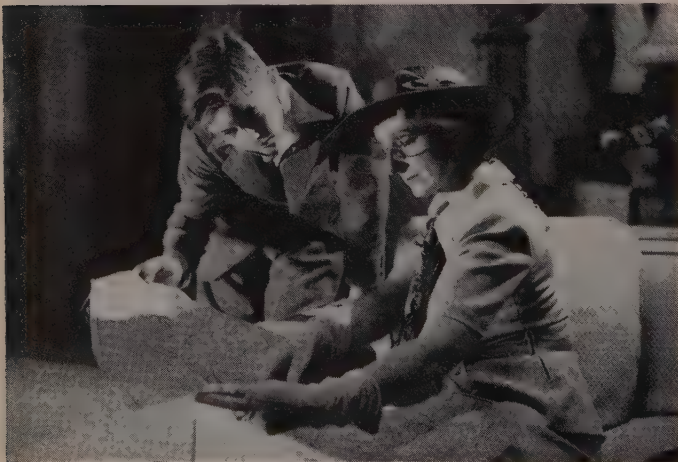
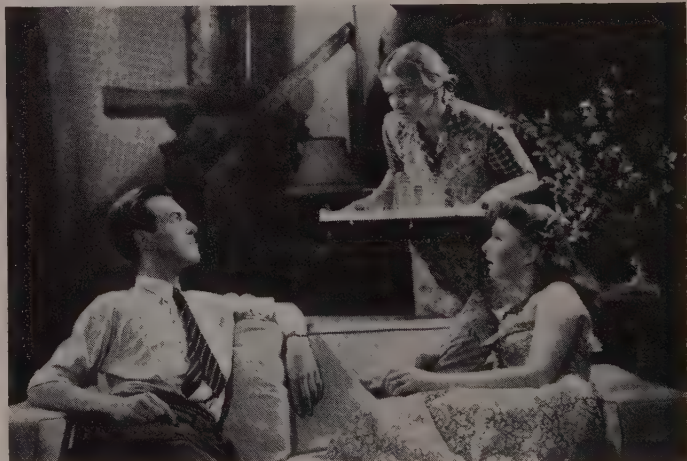
Michael: Norah—you know that French window that's not quite finished yet? Well, it's finished now!

On the day of the move further catastrophes befall Michael, who is still not reconciled to his wife's folly in buying the old cottage in Buckinghamshire, which, incidentally, has no water supply, though boring operations provide a constant noise in the background, if very little water.

Hester: I've got to see my young man tonight because he's getting married to-morrow!

A few months later and Norah and Michael have wrought a transformation at the cottage, which is now a dream place which even goes to Michael's head. There are, however, several difficulties to surmount with the domestic staff, whose intelligence is not of the highest.

(Julie Boas as Hester.)



Mrs. Douglas: This map is the original deed of this property and it shows that Mrs. Fuller's land extends right into Colonel Prescott's property.

The unsuspecting neighbour, Mrs. Douglas (Susan Richmond), makes an indiscreet disclosure to the Fuller's awful nephew, Raymond (Stanley Foreman) who contrives to get hold of the old map and takes it to the Colonel, who is already the Fullers' sworn enemy.

The domestic scene on the following (rainy) Sunday afternoon. Life for the Fullers is somewhat overcast at the moment because of the visit of Uncle Stanley, whom they tolerate only because they have hopes of his money. Zero hour is reached when Uncle Stanley calmly announces that he has no money at all and the Fullers' hopes of borrowing from him to settle the mortgage and so bypass the Colonel, fade into the distance. (On the extreme right, Max Helpmann as Clayton Shaw, a chance acquaintance from the local Rep.)



(Left):

Rita: What are we rehearsing? "The Lost Weekend?"

Norah takes a hand in cheering up the company by unearthing several bottles of wine, in fact, one for each guest, and before long all troubles are forgotten, though as yet no solution has come to the mortgage problem and it seems as though the Fullers will lose their cottage. (Right): Winifred Melville as Rita, a friendly actress, also from the local Rep.

Uncle Stanley: I don't believe I've met this gentleman, my boy—one of your gardeners?

The Fullers, convinced they have to hand over the cottage, are determined to restore it to its original condition and rather prematurely indulge in some wrecking operations. However, by the time the irate Colonel appears (Frank Tilton, left), Uncle Stanley (Julien Mitchell, right) has a brainwave and saves the situation.

A scene towards the end of the play.





Portraits by Fred Daniels

In the News . . .

(Above):

ROGER LIVESEY and URSULA JEANS who are starring in *Man of the World*, latest Company of Four production at the Lyric, Hammer-smith, which opened on 22nd February. Directed by 22-year-old Ken Tynan, *Man of the World* is a first play by C. E. Webber and was originally presented under the title of *Citizen of the World* by the Under Thirty Group. Roger Livesey will be remembered for his splendid interpretation of the role of Hoederer, in Jean Paul Sartre's *Crime Passionel*, which was also a Company of Four production, while Ursula Jeans, who is, of course, Mrs. Livesey in private life, was seen in T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* in last year's Edinburgh Festival.

(Right):

DIANA DORS

young starlet of British films, also has a leading role in *Man of the World*.



Whispers from the Wings

By
LOOKER ON

HUSKY-VOICED Joan Greenwood who has carved what looks like being a permanent niche for herself in the West End, on account of her bewitching comedy performance as the harrassed wife in *Young Wives' Tale* at the Savoy Theatre, is no real stranger to the stage. Many people who see her in this frothy Ronald Jeans comedy are under the impression that she spent the earlier part of her life in film studios and came to the theatre solely on the strength of her glamorous screen reputation. Nothing could be further from the truth.

She appeared as little girls in such plays as *The Women* and *Little Ladyship*, in which Lilli Palmer first began to attract attention, and then she had an experience which many an actress would envy. She went to the Oxford Playhouse where she was produced by one who is now the most fashionable dramatist of the moment—none other than Christopher Fry. Under his direction she played in *A Doll's House*, *The School For Scandal* and *Caesar And Cleopatra*. She looks back on those days with great affection, as Mr. Fry was so very quiet in his method, securing wonderful results from members of the company by winning their confidence and inspiring them with a determination to do their utmost—if only to please him and win his approval.

When Barbara Mullen played Peter Pan in the 1941 production of Barrie's play, Miss Greenwood made one of the most appealing and child-like Wendys seen since Hilda Trevelyan created the part. By way of contrast, two years later she was in the distinguished revival of Shaw's *Heartbreak House* at the Cambridge Theatre with Edith Evans, Isabel Jeans and Robert Donat. Shakespeare was another author she took in her stride, playing Ophelia to the Hamlet of Donald Wolfitt. She has the greatest admiration for this actor, whose love of the theatre is so sincere that he is content to take the classics round the provinces rather than reap richer rewards that might come his way in the West End. After a long succession of parts at the "Q" Theatre during the war years Miss Greenwood won instant recognition as a tragic actress in *Frenzy* with Peter Ustinov at the St. Martin's. The play had a short run, but her performance still lingers in the memory of all who saw it. Now, in *Young Wives' Tale*, she plays her first leading comedy role in the West End, as Sabina Pennant, whose culinary experiments so often result in her guests having to go out for a meal. Playing opposite Nauntun Wayne, her husband in the play, she enjoys



JOAN GREENWOOD

her moments on the stage, as much as we relish them in the audience.

"It is such a joy to play comedy," she declared, "after all those tragic young women I have impersonated on the screen. The audience is such an enormous help in *Young Wives' Tale*. They give us a tremendous amount back, as they react to our lines. Though we have already passed our 250th performance I can honestly say that no two nights have met with the same reception. The audiences have always been pleased, but I am astonished at the manner in which laughter varies night by night. Incidents which prove amusing to Tuesday night's audience may not have the same effect on Saturday night patrons. Their fancy may be tickled by another part of the play. In this manner we in the cast keep as fresh as the traditional daisy, always on our toes, ready to regulate the tempo of the performance according to the reception in front.

"Nauntun Wayne has taught me so much about meeting an audience half-way and matching my mood with theirs, just as Edith Evans gave me an object lesson in timing, as I watched her playing Hesione Hushabye in *Heartbreak House*. I shall be eternally grateful to these two masters of technique and always thankful for the luck that brought me into contact with them.

(Continued on page 30)

Heather Observed by ERIC JOHNS



HEATHER STANNARD
in *Venus Observed*

A SILLY old lady at the St. James' Theatre the other afternoon, feeling compelled to make conversation with her companion over their clattering tea-tray, decided to air her knowledge about Heather Stannard, the 21-year-old actress who has created the sensation of the year by leaping out of obscurity to play the youthful heroine of Christopher Fry's *Venus Observed*. "Do you know, my dear," confided the fatuous old crone, "a few weeks ago the girl was an amateur, playing at Windsor, where Sir Laurence Olivier saw her and decided to give her a chance in Town." My heart bled for all the poor artists in the cast—to think they were compelled to play before playgoers so lacking in common sense.

Would any actor-manager in his right mind suddenly give a part, originally written for Vivien Leigh, to an amateur, on the strength of seeing her give a solitary performance? Sir Laurence Olivier is far too shrewd a man of the theatre to cast any play with artists who had not mastered their job. True enough, he went down to Windsor and saw Miss Stannard playing Rosalind one afternoon and was sufficiently impressed with her appearance and the quality of her work to offer her the much coveted role of Perpetua, the young girl who attracts both father and son—played by Sir Laurence himself and Denholm Elliott. For all that, Miss Stannard was not one of those mythical fame-in-a-night actresses. She had a background that stood her in good stead.

After graduating at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art she accepted a job as under-

study to Margaret Rawlings in *The White Devil* at the Duchess, when Robert Helpmann gave his season there. She played the part for two weeks when Miss Rawlings was ill, more than satisfying the management, though the event was not blazed across the front of the daily press. On leaving the Duchess she was cast for the Judy Campbell part—Joanna Lyppiatt—in a touring version of *Present Laughter*. Six months up and down the country taught the young lady a good deal about different types of audience reaction, and how a Tyne man's meat may be a Thames man's poison. During the historic Scofield-Helpmann season at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1948, Miss Stannard made her mark in three widely differing roles. She played Cressida to the Troilus of Paul Scofield, Jessica to the Shylock of Robert Helpmann, and Bianca to the Othello of Godfrey Tearle. She played all three parts with discretion and distinction and proved herself a worthy colleague of the great names adorning the casts.

Still not content with her theatrical education, Miss Stannard left Stratford for Brighton, where she joined the Tennent Players during an experimental repertory season at the Dolphin Theatre. This led to an engagement last year at the Birmingham "Rep," when she was seen as Elizabeth in *Richard III*, the Mother in *Diary of a Scoundrel*, and in the title-role of *A Romantic Young Lady*. An isolated appearance in *The Thistle and the Rose* followed at the Boltons Theatre in Kensington, and then she was offered an engagement to play Rosalind at two weeks' notice at the Windsor "Rep." So when Sir Laurence saw her he could hardly be accused of giving a plum of a part to a raw recruit in the theatrical ranks.

Miss Stannard was flabbergasted when the role was offered to her. It was explained that as Vivien Leigh was still packing the Aldwych Theatre with *A Streetcar Named Desire*, she had to sacrifice the pleasure of creating the part Mr. Fry had written for her, as well as deny herself the satisfaction of playing opposite her husband on the occasion of his debut as actor-manager at the St. James's. Miss Stannard recalled a proverb about an ill-wind and accepted the script with both hands. Unlike her Rosalind engagement, Perpetua was not a rush job.

Seven weeks of study was possible. She was given the play three weeks before rehearsals started and read it once every day. She made no attempt to commit the lines to memory, as she had no idea how Sir Laurence wished her part to be dovetailed into the play, so she merely revelled in the verse each time she read it. It struck her as

(Continued on page 30)

Gower Parks (Continued)

I can get hold of. Even those bearing quite remotely on the subject are often not to be despised. At the same time, I go round the picture galleries, spending hours examining studies by contemporary artists. Thus I, so to speak, 'soak' myself in the atmosphere of the period. Then I go away and forget it all.

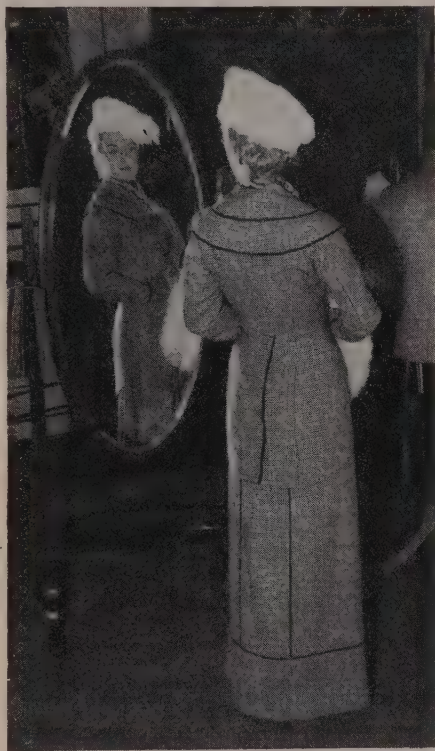
"When I set to work, I deliberately start with a clean sheet, drawing inspiration only from the mental pictures I have subconsciously absorbed. The great thing I aim for, is to get the stage-scene to look as it might have looked to people of that period—which is not at all the same thing as a laboured summing-up of archeological research. Suppose, for instance, I am tackling an 18th century French production. I go to Boucher, to Fragonard, to Watteau—and if I can succeed in capturing some of the magic they have condensed into their works of art, I know that I cannot be far wrong, even if the purists find fault with individual details, which must be simulated for effect, not slavishly reproduced.

"The thing to remember is the underlying unity of fashion in any given period. Furniture changes its style, often as a result of changes in dress (the broad-seated, rounded chairs and sofas for crinoline gowns, let us say, the spindle-legged, neo-classical furniture for the high-waisted, slender lines of the Directoire period, and so on). Decorations are adapted to harmonise with furniture. Dress itself is conditioned by what is worn beneath it. No artist can be a successful costume designer—that is to say, re-creator of period costumes—unless he knows exactly what people wore from the skin upwards in any given period, what fabrics were used, and how the garments were made, because all these things have a direct effect, not only on the finished costumes, but also on the way people move in them, how they sit or stand, how they carry themselves. He must know, for instance, where and when padings and stiffenings should be used—the correct materials for these foundations, whether to employ wire or whale-bone, horsehair or hemp. Even the stitching is important; remember that before the days of the sewing machine (which has scarcely been in use for a century) all clothing was sewn by hand, and this has a very important bearing on the 'hang' of many garments.

"How can a mere man know these things? A good costume class, in a reputable Art School, partly supplies the answer—and an endless curiosity about the tailor's craft ever after. Conscientious specialists have spent many years recording details of fashion and tailoring technique. Authentic costumes preserved in museums like the Victoria and Albert, and in private collections, are invaluable. The scrupulous designer must

constantly return to these reliable sources; to depend upon guess-work is fatal.

"He is the authority, and upon him rests the responsibility for creating a convincing stage illusion. This means that he must be adamant in his demands—a situation which often calls for great diplomacy and tact. I have had tussles myself with actresses who objected to the number of petticoats an Elizabethan gown demands, and who considered themselves slim enough to achieve an Edwardian effect without submitting to a



Beatrice Campbell tries on one of Gower Parks' costumes—of authentic vintage—for the film *My Brother Jonathan*.

cumbersome long corset, which flattens the stomach, clamps in the thighs, and throws the chest forward. In every case, when the point has been carried, the objectors have admitted that submission has made all the difference between the costume's success and failure, imposing just sufficient restraint on 'sloppiness' of carriage or general haziness of outline to render the ensemble *right*."

Comparing the technique of designing and art direction for scene and stage, Mr. Parks pointed out that the two methods afford a striking contrast. In a crowd scene on the

(Continued overleaf)

Gower Parks (Contd.)

stage, principals and the lesser people are equally clearly visible to the audience, hence the merest "walk-on" must be dressed with the same meticulous care as the star. Yet always the actors are far enough away from the naked eye for counterfeits to pass as true coinage in small details of their attire, such as trimmings, jewels, ornaments, and so on. In the films, exactly the opposite holds good. "Close-ups" on the scene enable almost every detail to be picked out, and no faking is possible. Since, however, only the featured people are usually considered important enough to be photographed in close-ups, crowds present very little problem. They are usually seen at long-distance range, and somewhat out of focus, hence what they wear is of very little importance, so long as the line, generally speaking is correct.

"By the way," remarked Mr. Parks in conclusion, "have you ever noticed how seldom even a star is *completely* photographed on the screen? Most shots end at the knees—one seldom sees, in a close-up, what is worn from the knees downwards. One takes the greatest pains to get skirt-hems, lengths, shoes, and so on, exactly right, and it is entirely wasted labour! Yet one dare not scamp this care. A costume-designer must never take a chance!"

Whispers from the Wings (Contd.)

"I think *Young Wives' Tale* has run so long because, for one reason, it is not a madly fictitious play. It is based on the current housing shortage, extracting comedy from two couples compelled to live in such close proximity in a house 'at the wrong end of St. John's Wood.' On that account it can hardly provide escapism for some people who come to see it. Yet they seem to laugh just the same, as we might be amused by a cartoon depicting a bus queue, though it infuriates us to wait in one. No doubt Mr. Jeans' comedy will date by the time we all have congenial living quarters at our disposal, but I hardly think it will be this year or even next! There is still a good chance for us to double our London run and then hand the play over to the repertory theatres for many a production up and down the country before the problem shows any sign of dating!"

Heather Observed (Contd.)

one of the loveliest plays she had ever read, so she attended the first rehearsal with a good working knowledge of the script. Rehearsals lasted four weeks, by which time she was ready to face the ordeal of a London first night—one of the most fashionable and exciting premières for many a moon.

The play proved fascinating because, to her, even the title seemed capable of more than one interpretation and the story had a curious parallel with the ancient legend of Paris and the apple. It was stimulating to play a part that could never be finally cut and dried. Members of the audience could each put their individual interpretation on both the role and the play itself. Once Miss Stannard learned to speak the verse without singing it, she was happy and threw herself into rehearsals with terrific zest. The biting wit and humour of the lines appealed to her and she feels they are the chief reason for the commercial success of *Venus Observed* at the St. James's, where in 1902 another fine verse play, *Paolo And Francesca*, failed to prove a money-maker, though it was hailed as an artistic triumph.

With no performance on Monday evenings, Miss Stannard is to be seen at other theatres, enjoying the successes of her former colleagues, such as Paul Scofield in *Ring Round The Moon*, or laughing at her favourite comedienne, Hermione Gingold, in *Fallen Angels*. She is obviously anchored at the St. James's for many months to come, after which her next part will be watched with intense interest. Her ambition throws little definite light on her next move. She wants to join the Old Vic Company and she wants to play a Noel Coward comedy in a gorgeous Mayfair set. She obviously cannot do both at the same time!

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Katharine Hepburn, Cloris Leachman and Jay Robinson in the Theatre Guild revival of *As You Like It*, which is reviewed on the following page. Noteworthy feature is the outstanding success of James Bailey's exquisite costumes and decor, and of Michael Benthall's clever production. These two brilliant young men have, of course, previously worked together at Covent Garden and Stratford-upon-Avon. (Picture by Vandamm)

Echoes from Broadway

BY OUR AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT E. MAWBY GREEN

SINCE our last report, Broadway bounced out of its lethargic state and sated theatregoers with about a dozen new productions, half of which have a good chance of achieving profitable runs, which is quite a remarkable average for the theatrical gamble.

Gilbert Miller, by arrangement with Sherek Players Ltd., has a sure winner with T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*, a brilliant poetic, satiric and religious dissertation on the ailing soul of modern man with the author prescribing a cure for both the chosen and the unchosen, and apparently New Yorkers are concerned about their emotional and moral bankruptcy, for nightly, a capacity house, pays rapt attention to this long, beautifully wordy, sophisticated morality play, hoping, we suppose, to find hope through the experience of the three characters Mr. Eliot has selected to dissect. Or can it be they have come only to enjoy Mr. Eliot's devastating wit, which has been described as Noel Coward with a brain or Evelyn Waugh?

Ever so briefly and bluntly put (a complete outline of the plot can be found in Harold

Matthews' article on the Edinburgh Festival in the October 1949 issue of *THEATRE WORLD*), Edward and Lavinia Chamberlayne, whose marriage and life together is a hopeless shambles, are led to a "good" life by a Harley Street psychiatrist, who first removes the illusion each cherishes most about himself, Edward being told he is incapable of loving and Lavinia incapable of being loved, and once this truth is accepted, they are told to start rebuilding their marriage on the basis of treating each other with the same respect and tolerance they would give to strangers. And in Mr. Eliot's comedy, it works, although in the recent American tragedies, *The Iceman Cometh*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman*, we have been told that man *cannot* live without his illusions about himself, which, of course, proves nothing but the difference in point of view between comedy and tragedy, or, a good psychiatrist in the nick of time can work wonders. But only half of Mr. Eliot's play is comedy, for the Harley Street psychiatrist is also an emissary of God, and he sees in Edward's young mistress, Celia Copel-

Echoes from Broadway (Contd.)

stone, a noble soul, and he leads her out of her emotional *impasse* by setting her on the road to a new exquisite peace via selflessness, sacrifice and martyrdom, which, too, is a "good" life.

Under E. Martin Browne's sensitive direction, the imported British cast has done an amazing job of mastering Mr. Eliot's difficult modern verse and the press and public have been quick to praise this superb performance. Alec Guinness, in particular, has been singled out for unusual acclaim, for the humour, authority and spiritual quality he brings to the mystic-psychiatrist.

Shakespeare's young and breathless antic on love in the Forest of Arden, *As You Like It*, is also in the sell-out class, thanks to Katharine Hepburn's presence in the cast as Rosalind, and the lavish production with which the Theatre Guild has backed her up, designed by England's James Bailey. These fairy tale settings and costumes move the audience to murmurs of approval and British director, Michael Benthall, by using them almost as a background for a ballet in his staging, makes this comedy uncommonly palatable even to those who find it inordinately silly. As for Miss Hepburn, the only point on which there is complete unanimity, is her hitherto unsuspected leg appeal. Otherwise there is a strong division of critical opinion. As you might expect, she does not try to play Rosalind, but rather endeavours to fit this romantic masquerader into her famous mannered personality. In a scene or two, this does work wonderfully well, but before the evening was through, we found ourselves wondering what Jo of *Little Women* was doing in this enchanted forest.

The third British directorial triumph of the month was achieved by Peter Glenville, who stayed on after his staging of Terence Rattigan's *The Browning Version* to help bring to life a dramatisation of Henry James' eerie *The Turn of the Screw*, by William Archibald, and now entitled *The Innocents*. This four character, two ghost melodrama, most leisurely paced and short on action, is strictly dependent on mood for its success, and Mr. Glenville with the aid of Jo Mielziner's handsome yet baleful setting, very subtly made his audience's flesh creep, by slowly punctuating evil into the performances of the demon possessed children (Iris Mann and David Cole), and then letting it flare up like wildfire to torture their beautiful new governess (Beatrice Straight). *The Innocents* is a flawless gem of its kind and the transatlantic wires have already started buzzing to put it in a West End setting.

The play predicted to have the most popular success of all is *The Happy Time* by Samuel Taylor and based on Robert Fontaine's novel of the same name. Another

one of those sentimental reminiscences of life with a colourful family in the good old days, this French Canadian version of *Life With Father*, *I Remember Mama*, with borrowings from *You Can't Take It With You* and *Ah, Wilderness*, is hardly the equal of any of them because its central theme of adolescent awakening is artificially, not honestly treated, at least to this observer. It is as though the author, director (Robert Lewis) and producers (Rodgers and Hammerstein) were desperately afraid they could never get a smash hit out of a gentle comedy, and so spent all their time filling in the gaps with gags, exaggerated bits of business, burlesque performances, double takes and double entendres—all very fine for pure farce but hardly worthy of a human comedy, which *The Happy Times* purports to be. Gilbert Miller is making the move to try and repeat this success in London.

The ultimate, surprise success last season of Jean Giraudoux's *The Madwoman of Chailot*, was undoubtedly the motivating force in getting M. Giraudoux's *The Enchanted* on the boards this year, but its chances of rising above a split set of notices is much less promising, lacking as it does Martita Hunt's brilliant and much discussed performance in the fabulous title role in the previously produced fantasy. *The Enchanted*, like its predecessor, is filled with upside down logic, this time stemming from the conflict between a young French school-teacher, whose close *rapprochement* with a ghost has brought complete happiness and true justice to the citizens of a provincial French town, and a government inspector, the symbol of Bureaucracy, who wants to get the town back to normal. But *The Enchanted* is less consistently quick witted, and a lot of metaphysical talk almost wafts the play right off the stage, despite the intelligent direction of George S. Kaufman and the delicate performance given by his attractive new wife, Leueen MacGrath, as the moonstruck maiden.

Also in an uncertain box office position, is a new thriller, *The Man*, by Mel Dinelli, a popular radio and screen writer, with such cinema chillers as *The Window* and *The Spiral Staircase* to his credit, and with this Kermit Bloomgarden production, he makes his Broadway playwrighting debut. His tale of terror is a cross between *Kind Lady* and *Night Must Fall* and tells of the dire consequences that befall a good-hearted, middle class widow (Dorothy Gish), when she engages a young handyman (Don Hanmer) for a day, only to have the amiable fellow turn out to be a classic example of a paranoic. Thus Broadway's knowledge of the psychologically abnormal has been enlarged, for earlier this season, Alexander Knox's *The Closing Door* served up a nice, incipient schizophrenic. While *The Man* is the better

(Continued on page 35)

New Shows of the Month (Contd.)

whelmily symbolic. Ronan O'Casey, bearded, wan and hollow-voiced, made Julian look as if he had been with Scott in the Antarctic. John Bailey made David hard, harsh, glum and clear—enjoyable to watch. Carla Lehmann made the unlikely Louise seem perfectly natural and altogether admirable. The opening bars of Beethoven's "Moonlight" sonata are twice played and it is praise to say that the play is not utterly swamped thereby. It was produced by Vivian Milroy. H.G.M.

"The Schoolmistress"

WHEN revived at the Arts Theatre a short time ago *The Schoolmistress* received wide acclaim, but now that it has reappeared at the Saville Theatre burnished up as a star medium the critics are not quite so sure, though the public are lapping it up with relish.

However, taking the broad view, it was obvious that the play would have to be heightened in effect to fill a big theatre accustomed to musical shows, and although one or two parts were overplayed, even within the framework of farce, it seems a mere quibble to object unduly.

One can still enjoy Pinero's wonderful skill in construction, and the party scene, which fills the second act, is still extremely funny and no one could fail to fall under the spell of Cyril Ritchard's The Hon. Vere Queckett or Fred Emney's mountainous Rear-Admiral. The one role that is scarcely acceptable, however played, is that of the schoolmistress owner of the Academy for young ladies herself, who gets her pin money secretly by singing in grand opera, and Madge Elliott did her best with a well-night impossible part.

Moya Nugent provided a nice contrast as the Rear-Admiral's wife and among the younger generation Joan Forrest was outstanding as Peggy Hesslerigge, the article pupil at Volumnia College, who was directly and indirectly the cause of all the complications. Joan Lord, Ellen Martin and Judith Stott were nicely in period as three of the pupils, and Roy Dean was very effective as the secret—and jealous—young husband of Miss Stott's Dinah Ranklin.

F.S.

"Time is a Dream"

THE Watgate Workshop presented *Time is a Dream* by H. R. Lenormand in a translation by Winifred Katzin for a week at the end of January. Opportunities to see the work of this author are rare. The acting and direction on this occasion gave the feeling of a genuine experience. The plot, dealing with the inescapableness of a fate already revealed, takes strong hold on the imagination.



MICHAEL DARBYSHIRE

who is making a strong individual impression in the difficult role of the hysterical curate (wrongly attributed to Michael Newell in our last issue), in B. A. Meyer's production of the Agatha Christie thriller, *Murder at the Vicarage*, starring Barbara Mullen and Reginald Tate, at the Playhouse. Mr. Darbyshire was also seen as a member of the cloth, when he appeared as the Vicar in the revival of *The Farmer's Wife* at the Apollo Theatre, and prior to that gained valuable experience, following his war service of six and a half years, in repertory seasons at Dundee and at Stratford (London).

(Portrait by Beric Studio)

The characters, especially the doomed man, are extremely introspective, dipping into their psyches and scraping round in the manner at which the French excel. The female parts seemed to fit like gloves and Lorna Fraser, Margaret Morris and Barbara Andrews may be congratulated upon the natural manner of their wearing. Margaret Morris' success in bringing completely to life an unusually rare and shadowy character was particularly impressive. The male part is more difficult. Nico Van Eyden is a "case." It would be easy to over-develop him, with fatal results to the work as a whole. Robert Weedon kept him credible and maintained one's sympathy with the character. Philip Rose acted the enigmatic, seer-like Javanese with quiet sincerity. The play was sensitively directed by Alfred Hyslop.

A James Thurber duologue on what happens in *Macbeth* was a slight but not unagreeable hors d'œuvre, nicely served by Alfred Hyslop and Katherine Hendy.

H.G.M.

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RAM GOPAL

standing before a Jain image of Bhudda during his recent visit to South India. Now back in London, Mr. Gopal is preparing for an Indian dance season later in the year when with 30 dancers and musicians he will present some folk dances and temple dances not hitherto seen in London, as well as a ballet based on the Shah Jehan, builder of the Taj Mahal.

Echoes from Broadway (Contd.)

constructed melodrama of the two, it still has difficulty generating enough suspense for a complete evening's entertainment, and the search among managers for another *Angel Street* or *Uncle Harry* continues.

That most ingratiating of actors, Lee Tracy, starring in *Mr. Barry's Etchings*, seems fated for his second failure of the season. In December for two performances, he was the harassed editor of a New York(er) magazine in *Metropole* and now in February he is an engraver, who, for his own pleasure, turns out perfect fifty dollar bills, and then starts distributing them to worthy causes, and as usual, Mr. Tracy is as winning as his comedy is woeful. This also leaves producer Brock "Harvey" Pemberton with his second counterfeited comedy of the year, for in November he exhibited a feeble variation on *Private Lives* entitled *Love Me Long*.

In the musical field, the Theatre Guild's production of *Arms And The Girl*, based on that popular comedy on bundling during the American Revolution, *The Pursuit of Happi-*

ness, proved something of a disappointment considering the calibre of the talents involved. Herbert and Dorothy Fields (*Annie Get Your Gun*) wrote the book with Rouben Mamoulian, Mr. Mamoulian (*Oklahoma!*, of course) directed, and Morton Gould composed the music for Miss Fields' lyrics, the net result being one of high class mediocrity. Georges Guetary made a very favourable impression in this, his Broadway debut, as a romantic Hessian soldier, who falls in love with a colonial lass, bent on winning the war single handed, pertly played by Nanette Fabray. But the bullseye of the evening was scored by Pearl Bailey as a runaway slave, with her lusty, deadpan singing of "There Must Be Something Better Than Love" stopping the show cold.

Two new revues, *Alive And Kicking* and *Dance Me A Song*, had very little to offer in any direction, the former being distinguished only by Jack Colf, both as leading dancer and choreographer, and the latter by bringing to the foreground a new, clever monologist, Wally Cox.

Beauty Trends

IT is an excellent idea to pack beauty preparations in such attractive boxes that we want to display them. The new Pomeroy powder boxes have a white bakelite top which matches the tops of their jars and bears the famous white dove. The powder is still, of course, of the finest and is delicately perfumed.

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In *The Parasites*, Daphne Du Maurier's "book of the month," OMY Bath Essence is mentioned on two occasions as being used by the heroine, Maria.

Amateur Stage

AN East Anglian breeze in February blew a little sanity into one of the corners of the amateur stage where it is often needed. A Hunstanton group decided by a two-thirds majority to ban the giving of bouquets and presents to the cast on the last night of shows. Said the producer:

"At our last show thirty-four of the cast got flowers and presents, two got nothing. One girl may get a lot because she has more relatives and boy friends in the audience than anyone else, while another girl, possibly a better actress, gets nothing except heart-break."

It may be due to the prohibitive cost of flowers in this welfare state, but the practice of making such presentations has declined in the amateur stage in these post-war years. It should die out altogether.

The Norfolk producer states exactly the basic reason for its abolition, but may it be added here that a majority of the audience usually has another very good reason for not wishing to endure the painful ordeal of politely applauding the tedious presentation of these gifts. It is that having seen and applauded the show on its merits, it wants to get home and to bed as quickly as possible. In this matter the amateur stage

should follow the excellent example of the professionals.

Sheffield and District Amateur Theatre Association reports that its scheme for running a full length play festival for its members this season is meeting with real success. Two independent adjudicators visit incognito a society's production, make their independent reports, and the average of the two sets of markings is kept for the final placings. The team with highest marks receives a trophy on the final night of the one-act play festival in May.

Sizer-Simpson Repertory Company at Hull are in the final stages of converting a disused church into a playhouse to seat 200, and are now driving for 500 additional associate members to assist in meeting the cost. A play a month, running a week each for the eight months from September to April is planned.

Included in London's February productions were *Castle In Spain*, a musical not often seen, by London Transport M.D.S.; *Shadow and Substance* by the Questors; *The Man Who Came To Dinner* by the Comedy Club; *Tony Draws A Horse* by Wakefield D.C.; *Marriage, Two Gentlemen of Soho* and *They Came To a City* by the Taverners; and a bill of four new one-act plays by Player-Playwrights at the B.D.L. Practice Theatre. This latter group aim to help new playwrights by staging their work before the public.

Young Theatre, formed in 1948 for the production of worthwhile plays in the West Riding of Yorkshire, will stage Fletcher's masque *The Faithful Shepherdess*, followed by Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and a Molière play. Costumes and decor are their own work.

In March the Curtain Club, which curiously enough is basically all-male, inviting women guest players for particular productions, stage *Rope* at the Chanticleer Theatre, South Kensington, on the 18th and 19th. The Walthamstow Settlement Drama School choose *Family Portrait* and *King Lear*, and in the same district the Phoenix Players give *Playbill* on the 23rd and 25th.

From 7th March for two weeks that energetic group, the Alan Turner Opera Co., of Derby, stage the Tauber play *The Land of Smiles*, taking some liberties with this Lehar musical in the way of additional scenes and costumes.

Publications Received

Master Adams, play in 3 acts by Patricia O'Connor. H. R. Carter Publications, 4/6.
Right Again Barnum, comedy in 3 acts, by Joseph Toweltv. H. R. Carter Publications, 4/6.
The Late Lamented, comedy in 1 act, by Falkland L. Cary. S. French, 1/6.
Honeymoon Couple, play in 1 act, by Neil Grant. S. French, 1/6.
Fair Chance, play in 1 act, by Mabel Facey. Deane & Sons, 1/6.

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